3:Westermann E-5 (1910) 1912 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

retreat. Around our house they went in a regular stampede, and forming in a line again in front of the house for another charge.

This they repeated a number of times. Then a crowd of women, who had followed their husbands and sweethearts to battle, acted the part of foe, only to be overcome by the brave warriors and driven back. This part was very amusing. One old body with great bravery marched out and charged, using her pipe as her weapon. The men were a bit rough in driving her back, and she was evidently afraid her dear pipe would come to grief, so she took it inside our house and when next we saw her she was in the thick of a fray with a long weed as her weapon of offence and defence".]

The dry season is also the time for travelling. Relatives pay mutual visits, and marriageable young men go to the Nuers and Dinkas with spears, wire, stuffs, and dura, which they exchange for sheep and calves.

IV. RELIGION.

In the religion of the Shilluks three components ary clearly distinguishable: 1. Jwok (*jwɔ̀k*) or God; 2. Nyikang (*Ńɟìkàŋò*), the progenitor and national hero of the Shilluks; 3. ajwogo (*àjwɛ̀gó*), the witch doctor or sorcerer. These three do not exist separate from each other, but have many relations amongst one another. There are still other forms of religious service, but they are not so prominent as the three mentioned.

"Jwok (*jwɔ̀k*) is a supreme being, residing above". Whether he is regarded as creator is not sure. According to the sayings of some natives he surely is, but it seems probable that this belief, if there is such a one, is young, and must be traced back to Mohammedan or Christian influences. — On certain occasions an ox is killed as a sacrifice to Jwok, though this is done more frequently to Nyikang; prayers are also offered to Jwok, but according to my information, they have only one prayer to Jwok (for which vide page 171), while to Nyikang there are many. "Praying" to Jwok is expressed by a different word from that which serves for designating a prayer to Nyikang; the first is *lāmǫ* "to pray"; its original meaning is probably: to conjure. In praying to Nyikang *kwachǫ* "to ask for, to beg" is used. While the prayers to Nyikang are sung, and accompanied by dances, that one to Jwok is only spoken, not sung, and not accompanied by dancing. Jwok has no visible symbols or temples, nor are the prayers to him offered by a priest or sorcerer, but by the chief or village-elder.

In the heart and mind of the Shilluk Jwok does not possess a deep-rooted rank. In some way they do attribute good and evil to him, and chiefly the

756 Many of the people say that if a man refuses to consult the medicine men, God will be angry with that person, and leave him to get along without help, which means that he will be cut off from all supernatural aid.

Many of the witch doctors are specialists, while others undertake to work charms for many different things. In practically every thing undertaken the witch doctor is consulted. If a man is going on a journey he lets the medicine man work over him to give him safety from dangers seen and unseen. Very frequently before a hunt the witch doctor assures them of success in the chase, and in the hunting of dangerous animals he ties the quarry so that it will not be able to injure the hunters. A thief who hopes to steal a cow often goes to a witch doctor, and has a charm wrought over him so that the people of the village will not be aroused by any sound he may make. The witch doctor gives victory when the people are going out to war. He also detects the men, who are to be killed in the fight, and he works a charm over them, which causes the impending death to be averted. The power to kill by magic resides in the witch doctor, and many other things are done by them. Diseases are supposed to yield to their charms. The power to cure snake bites, and to heal a burn by spitting on it are special powers belonging to only a few. Many are able to give a fetish, which protects its owner.

[484] 751 [224] [726] [752] 755

The witch doctor will not treat himself when ill, and he does not treat the members of his own family. He goes to some other witch doctor to be helped.

756 789 The fetish plays a very large part in the work of a witch doctor. He gives the little charms for many different purposes. They are supposed to give protection on a journey, to insure success in courtship, to protect from wild animals, to insure a favourable judgment, to protect cattle in crossing a river, and many other powers are ascribed to them. However a fetish is only effective for the one purpose for which it was obtained.

756 One medicine man, when asked how he cured a patient, said: "I first collect a small fee, and then I work over the patient. When the patient recovers I return and collect a large fee".

The dismissal of a patient is attended with some ceremony. The patient and witch doctor make a trip to the river in the evening.

15: Oyler M-5 (ca. 1918) 1926 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

will get her a calf-skin. The mother of the girl is supposed to tie the calf-skin the first time the girl wears it to a dance. If her mother is dead, then a woman the same age as her mother ties it for her.

Some Begging Customs of the Women.

The Shilluk women seem to derive much pleasure from begging for cattle from some of the richer men of the tribe. The occasion is made a holiday for the women of the village, and they go forth in their finest clothes. If the recipient of their honour lives at some distance, the start is made early in the morning, and all the women of the village go. If there are too many women in the village, then the women of a certain age go. The women of two different villages will not unite to go on these expeditions. The proper season for these begging dances is just before the rains begin, though they may be held any time during the dry season.

The women decide upon the man to be honoured by their party before they start. Occasionally, they honour a man from their own village, but in that case they only ask for a sheep. Often they go five or six miles, and sometimes they go as far as fifteen or twenty miles. While they are gone the men must stay at home to care for the babies. Often, on such occasions, a mother will leave a tiny baby at home for the whole day. Usually, they object to leaving their babies at home, but for this event it is different.

The man to be honoured is not warned, lest he hide from them. Should the man they are seeking be absent from the village, the women hang a string of beads made from the shell of the ostrich egg (rek) in the enclosure between his two houses. When he returns, he says, "Who brought this rek?" His wife replies, "The women brought it." He asks, "What do they want?" His wife replies, "An ox." His wife says "They will return." He says, "They will find nothing." His wife replies, "So many should have something, I have children, so many women should not be refused by red lips." When the women return they usually get the ox.

Before the women start on such a trip they choose a leader, unless they already have one. She is called a baña. She has the powers of a magistrate. If any trouble occurs among the women, she acts as judge. She is crowned with the rek, as the chief of the village is crowned. In

15: Oyler M-5 (ca. 1918) 1926 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

484 562 624 future expeditions of the same party she will be chief. In the village she has the right to judge cases that are strictly between women.

431 425 484 626 [535 543] A man may refuse to give an ox, making the excuse that he has nothing to give. Then the women will mutter, saying, "He kills us by making us stand in the hot sun." They seem to think he is cheating them. The man's wife may intercede on their behalf. She will put on her husband's cloth, put a rek about her neck, anoints her body with oil, and then takes the chief's spear, and dances among the women. For such a display the chief will usually relent, and tell his young men to bring out the ox. He may be very churlish, and refuse to give them what they desire. They depart, muttering curses on him and his family. If in a short time sickness should occur in his family it is attributed to the ill-will of these women. He sends a messenger to call them. They come and get the ox. He then tells them of the sickness in his family, and the women order ashes to be brought. The women fill their hands with the ashes. They then pray after this manner, "You are God. We were refused an ox by this chief. He now has sickness. We are no longer angry at him. Permit him to escape." Next they spit on the ashes they hold in their hands, and then sprinkle them all over the members of his household. The women then depart, and the patient recovers.

[753 755]

431 425 [788] When the women go to a chief and he gives them an ox, they sprinkle ashes about his house as a blessing. The ox is taken to their village, and it may be killed immediately, though it is more likely to be kept for a time. When the animal is killed the brisket is given to the old men of the village. The old women take the rump, and the younger women divide the remainder of the meat.

425 556 431 [533] A man is glad to have the women come to beg from him, even when he refuses to give them what they desire. It is a great compliment to have the women come, as it shows that his fame has spread abroad as a rich and generous man. Then, too, the ceremony is such as to feed the vanity of the man singled out for the honour. The women usually rush up to the house shouting and singing his praises. They sing songs about his bravery, and tell of his virtues, but the chorus of their song usually is: "Brother, lead out that ox."

425 431 After a chief has given an ox, the women go away saying that he is a fine man, and a great chief. The women seem to demand a great deal. Once in a case observed, the ox was given. The women did not watch

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the animal carefully, and he made his escape, and ran away. It was too much trouble for them to catch the animal, and so they went back to the old chief and demanded that he give them another animal in exchange for the one that had escaped. The new animal was given to them, and they departed.

Once some women went to dance before a chief, who was away from home. One of his followers, anxious to save the property of his master, took a whip made of hippopotamus hide, and used it freely on the women. They retreated to a considerable distance, and sat down to discuss the matter. At that time the chief returned, and he was distressed when he heard what his follower had done. He made peace with the women, and gave them the ox.

Visitors from other villages are not supposed to go on these trips, nor are they allowed to eat of the meat when the animal is killed. When a woman is married and goes to the village of her husband, she is not allowed to go on these begging trips until after she has lived there a full year. The women might consent, but her husband would be angry, as it might lead to her being led astray. She does not have the right to return to her old home and go with her old friends on their begging expeditions. Women in the advanced stages of pregnancy are not permitted to go on these trips.

These dances are a great diversion for the women. They are looked upon as memorable occasions. The chief visited may not be in a financial position to afford to give the ox, and yet he gets full value for the animal in the prestige it gives him.

The women have another begging custom that is suggestive of Ruth. When a man threshes his grain he calls in the young men, who beat it out with flails. The women of the man's family winnow the grain. Often the man does not have enough women-folk to do all the work, and other women are called in to help. The helpers get all the grain that is left in the chaff as their portion.

Many women come to beg from the owner of the threshing floor. They do not speak to the owner of the floor, but they make a general statement that they have come to beg. They sit in silence, and watch the progress of the work. They do not ask for grain, but each woman keeps her gourd in a prominent position. When the threshing is finished, the owner of the field fills a basket with grain, and from that basket he

18: Howell E-5 (1937) 1941 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

613 The Shilluk, although he is conscious of his relationship to his widely scattered kinsmen, normally thinks in terms of his localised lineage. Thus in using the word *Kwar* he often refers to some comparatively recent ancestor, probably to the Shilluk who originally migrated to his settlement and founded his particular lineage. The emphasis here is upon the circumstances in which he is questioned. Away from his settlement and speaking in tribal terms he will refer to the ancestor common to all his kinsmen, in more detailed family discussions to the founder of his lineage.

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Every Shilluk is thus a member of a large and scattered kinship group. He is also a member of a local lineage and is bound to it by vigorous feelings of unity fostered by proximity and common interests. In contrast he is also the inhabitant of a settlement (*Podh*) and common residence within it implies something more than a neighbourly spirit. Its occupants are not a mere collection of independent lineages, for they are united by social, economic and political obligations, by the need for mutual protection and have recognised rules of behaviour to one another.

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The Shilluk are now a sedentary tribe, though they were originally nomads, and it has been said that their apparent political and social cohesion in contrast to many related peoples, has been partly due to the greater facility of communication. In fact their history has been one of frequent internal strife and dynastic quarrels, but it is true to say that in the rainy season, when normal communications are made difficult by the rising of the river level, they have always had an unrestricted medium of travel on the Nile itself and settlements are conveniently situated near to its banks. Shilluk villages are built in an almost continuous line along the west bank with a few scattered settlements on the east bank and on the lower reaches of the Sobat. This formation, however, means that they are dispersed over a very long area, and from Fashoda in the centre, it is a considerable journey to Tonga or Muomo. Taking Shilluk country as a long narrow strip, without including the inland pastures or hunting grounds, the density of population is undoubtedly far greater than among most Nilotic tribes in the Sudan, but the length of country between the centre and

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the more distant settlements, owing to the length of the populated area, is not very much shorter. Most parts of Shilluk country are accessible to the inhabitants even when the water-courses and swamps are full, but travelling is not easy and social contact consequently less frequent in the rainy season. The result of such periodic inconvenience of communication and the length of inhabited country are twofold. In the first place, in the past at anyrate, the immediate power of the central authority the *Reth*, was slightly diminished and he was more dependent on the loyalty and competence of the settlement chiefs. Second, difficulty of communication increases the isolation of the settlement and intensifies the feeling of unity within it. Moreover, the clan, having no territorial basis, is put to a further disadvantage. The settlement thus gains importance socially, economically and politically in the structure of the tribe.

The formation of the settlement is based on a particular association of lineages and its structure can only be understood after a searching examination of their position. The fission of clan segments, individual enterprise and migration has been frequent for a very long period of Shilluk history. In each settlement there are therefore both indigenous elements and newcomers. Mr. Pumphrey has explained in outline the position and significance of the *Dyil*.[1] They are fundamentally associated with the land they occupy, and theoretically they enjoy great prestige and authority. Among most primitive peoples the fixation of sentiment on land is bound up with human interests and those who are more closely bound to it acquire special functions and prerogatives not accorded to newcomers. Besides their ritual association with the land, the *Dyil* have obligations and observances of primary importance in the social machinery of their settlement and they form the centre round which internal political activities revolve. Subsequent accretions known in Shilluk as *Wedh* normally hold a position of political subservience to the *Dyil*. It must be emphasised here, that this implies no social inferiority; it merely means that the *Dyil* are expected to take the lead in matters of importance to all inhabitants of the settlement. The *Jago* is usually the chosen representative of the *Dyil* lineage and holds the *Law Dwong* of office Mr. Pumphrey has pointed out that

[1] [Dyil are the descendants of the people who originally received grants of land from Nyikang. - Analyst]

29:Dempsey M-5 (1940-1954) 1955
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like bellows, and then passes it on. Pipe and beer circulate freely, and under the mellowing influence of both, tongues are quickly loosened and conversation turns to the perennial topic of cattle. After a while, your cigarette finished, you will excuse yourself to your host and, rising from your cramped position, greet everyone present in turn and make your escape into the open air.

The Shilluk, sensible man, starts his day with the sun. He emerges from his hut, however, with heavy head and bloodshot eyes, since he has been sleeping for seven or eight hours in a small windowless hut with the doorway blocked with a heavy grass mat and perhaps a smoky fire burning as a protection against mosquitoes. As a further defence against these pests he covers himself from head to foot with the red ashes from the cow-dung fire, but this does not worry him; if there is water handy he may rinse his hands and face, if not, he will remain as he is until his next visit to the river —perhaps today, perhaps tomorrow or the next day—gives him the chance of taking a bath.

Gradually the village comes to life: the women appear, winding their drab-looking cloths round them, and set off on their daily pilgrimage to the river with the heavy water pots balanced on their heads. The little group breaks up and the women fall into line, one behind the other, as they reach the narrow track leading out of the village, chattering like starlings as they swing along. The boys come out of the byre smothered like their elders in the red ashes in which they have been lying all night, looking like imps from the lower regions. They begin to clean up round the tethered cattle, collecting the cow dung and spreading it out to dry in the sun for fuel. When this is done they milk the cows and goats. From one compound comes the sound of dull thumping as some girl pounds the millet grain into coarse flour. The grain is small and hard, red or white in colour. It is first winnowed by being poured at shoulder height from a basket and then sieved in a boat-shaped scoop of plaited fibre. The grain is then put into a

29:Dempsey M-5 (1940-1954) 1955
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[facing p. 53]

Photo : Fr. F. Spekaukas

A drudge that means a trudge. Shilluk women set off for the Nile to fetch water. From Detwok—a mile each way